

# WAR OF WORDS ©

or **De-constructing decades of divisive deception.**

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Deliberately manipulated reports from the front line of one of Australia's legendary military battles in Papua New Guinea (PNG) were responsible for an official deception of epic proportions. Increasing public awareness of discredited facts has encouraged interrogation of bureaucratic culture which perpetuated confusion over the naming of the Kokoda action. This enduring charade is now in sight of reaching an honourable resolution.

The cynical but accurate maxims "**Truth is the first casualty of war**" and "**If a lie is repeated often enough, it becomes the truth**" were to become reinforced in my understanding of military conflict. When first approaching PNG's Port Moresby in January 1963 with scant knowledge of this new mysterious country, all I knew is what I had recently seen on the occasional TV news stories or remembered from my very early years when reports of Kokoda action were in every newspaper, cinema newsreel and radio news bulletin. Comfortably strapped into a window seat of a DC6 on final approach to Jacksons airstrip I was fascinated by bombers and other aircraft semi-submerged in the clear waters of Bootless Bay below. It was just over 15 years since hostilities ceased but the almost intact war relics stimulated my interest in the country and the Kokoda campaign.

I was to be based in PNG for what was to become five years, initially setting up the Administration's new film unit and then as an independent news and documentary cinematographer and producer. But without the usual obligatory academic research credentials to comment on historical military matters. The following text is compiled from my personal experiences and natural curiosity of a news cameraman, information from credible people and extracted from verified private, official and academic publications.

During its ten-year gestation period, ever-evolving versions of this article were regularly circulated to many organisations and individuals knowledgeable in military matters, especially of the Kokoda campaign. They included the Australian Army Archives and the Australian War Memorial (AWM). I sought comment and feedback, especially if they could identify any errors of fact. No major mistakes were revealed but valuable new material emerged. This resulted in deletions, additions and modifying my stance on earlier assertions. In other words, I had to pull my head in. This article should not to be taken as a qualified militarily-endorsed thesis, but as the legendary TV physics presenter Professor Julius Sumner-Miller put it, "*poses enchanting questions for enquiring minds*".

2.

During the past eight decades, verified new information contradicting many aspects of the official version of the Kokoda battle continued to emerge. Their original suppression contributed to public disagreements by historians including the resultant passionate and often heated debate over the use of the words, "trail" or "track". Most Australians now realise subsequent revelations differed from what was, and continues to be the most potent weapon of war - propaganda - manipulated news provided by the media and official sources during and after the Second World War. This deliberate public betrayal can be traced back and was mainly due to severe press censorship and the incessant egotistical self-promotion imposed by the American General Douglas MacArthur after he was appointed Supreme Commander of all Allied troops in the South Pacific.

Renowned for taking credit for the efforts and successes of others, he ensured his own miscalculations and bad decisions were always suppressed from the media and rarely, if ever officially chronicled. Being aided and abetted by the meekly compliant Australian Advisory War Council and his designated Australian Army subordinate General Blamey, it reinforced the deceptive official archiving of MacArthur's questionable presentation of Australian military action. In particular, he enforced the new mandated name for the legendary wartime route, 'Kokoda Trail' which was subsequently adopted and gazetted by The Australian Battles Nomenclature Committee.

His corrupted legacy continues to be an embarrassing ethical burden on both the Army Archives and the AWM who had no option but to adopt it for their future records, policies and displays. It was accepted and endorsed by the Memorial's original curators even though they had evidence in their archives and vaults which contradicted their public stance. Because of the reverence in which the AWM was and is held by the Australian public, all accepted "*Kokoda Trail*" as our nation's official name for the battle route. The bureaucratic culture which enmeshed both organisations bound them to continue promulgating MacArthur's fraudulent directives. Due to his self-created god-like persona, no military or civil authority or the media were game enough to question or confront his actions. With this deliberate dishonesty going unchallenged, they cascaded over the decades to where irrevocable decisions and awards were gazetted and conferred. It is unlikely the resultant officially endorsed rotten egg can ever be unscrambled.

During the 1930s, tension was building up in Europe as a belligerent Hitler invaded and declared war on Poland on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939. The conflict immediately escalated to become known as World War 2 (WW2). When British Prime Minister Chamberlain declared war on Germany on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, an hour later Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced Australia, as a member of the British Commonwealth, was obliged to assist and was now at war.

3.

Under Menzies' orders, Australian sailors, airmen and two divisions of previously trained soldiers immediately departed to assist the Mother Country. Most ended up fighting in the Middle East including at the legendary Siege of Tobruk.

During the 1930s, Japan had been at war with neighbouring China, increasingly demonstrating its expansionist intentions in the region. By September 27<sup>th</sup> 1940 it had signed a tripartite military alliance with Germany and Italy to be known as the Berlin Pact. By extension, it now became involved in WW2. The Japanese surprise attack by their carrier-based squadrons of fighter and bomber aircraft on the US Pacific fleet moored in Hawaii's Pearl Harbour at 8am Sunday December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941 caught the American navy off guard. Nearly all their warships were moored closely together and with their sailors, suffered catastrophic casualties. Similar tactical errors were later to be repeated in New Guinea. This forced the USA into the war. On the same morning, the Japanese forces invaded and took control of the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong but without declaring war on Britain. Their Pearl Harbour tactics were intended to neutralise the American fleet which they considered their biggest obstacle to reaching their objective: to take control of the massive oil deposits in the Dutch East Indies. They were now heading for New Guinea with all its dangerous implications for Australia, now faced with having the majority of its trained fighting forces already deployed to the other side of the world. The need to quickly raise another fighting force to protect the homeland was of the utmost urgency.

Menzies selected a Gallipoli veteran, subsequently a recently knighted controversial Commissioner of the Victorian police force Major General Sir Thomas Blamey to create and train the eventual 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Imperial Force. He recruited a fellow Gallipoli veteran Colonel Sydney Rowell as his Chief of Staff. Together they began building a new army to confront the expected challenge ahead. After a change of government on October 7<sup>th</sup> 1941 Prime Minister John Curtin bravely challenged new British Prime Minister Winston Churchill by demanding Australian troops be withdrawn from fighting in the Middle East under British command. Also, those troops in transit to the war zone immediately return to protect their homeland. The attack on Pearl Harbour occurred two months later, prompting the American military to bring MacArthur out of retirement, assigning him to take charge of protecting the Philippines. After being vanquished by the Japanese from his first posting at Bataan, he fled on March 11<sup>th</sup> 1942 to a safer base at Corregidor in the Pacific, leaving his depleted forces at Bataan to their own fate. He was accompanied by his wife with their infant son and a small group of his most loyal and trusted officers, the cohort later known as the Bataan Gang.

Japanese aircraft began bombing PNG's Port Moresby on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1942 in an attempt to secure the town as a base from which they could mount an invasion of Australia. The intended action three months later was thwarted with the Battle of the Coral Sea.

4.

When America joined forces with Australia to stem the Japanese advance, MacArthur and his entourage retreated to Australia in March 1942. Here he was appointed Supreme Commander of all Australian and American troops in their mission to defeat the aggressors. Several well-researched and authenticated papers, archive material by respected military, civil and political sources confirm MacArthur was considered by his peers to be mentally unstable, extremely egotistical and enjoyed opulence whenever he travelled or wherever he stayed. His cohort also lived in luxury accommodation at the best hotels while most Australians were enduring wartime hardship. Remote from the Kokoda battle action and obviously ignorant of the conditions under which our troops were fighting, they were constantly denigrating the Diggers' efforts, uncontested by MacArthur's nominal subordinate, our own compliant General Blamey. Port Moresby had become the focus of major staging efforts to prevent the Japanese from capturing the town by the overland mountainous route. But the Gang considered it only a side-show to the main Pacific event and initially refused our troops their urgently requested support. The Australian army brass vigorously stressed the importance of stemming the Japanese jungle push, forcing MacArthur to focus their attention on that immediate crucial conflict. This is where many official historical accounts of the Kokoda action became contrived for other than military reasons.

Now a Lieutenant General, Sydney Rowell, then in charge of the Australian 1 Corps was ordered by General Blamey to take over operations in New Guinea. He arrived in Port Moresby on August 13<sup>th</sup> 1942, quickly appraising the logistics confronting his troops. He discovered what had been presumed as a singular pathway over the Owen Stanley mountains was in fact a network of multiple circuitous or parallel tracks through the jungle connecting many villages along the route. Before the Kokoda offensive was put under American command, the term "track" had been used by most of the troops for these collective jungle routes between Owers Corner near Port Moresby and Kokoda. Others used a more colourful and derogatory term. Army tactical intelligence units gave them their own unique names but likely at MacArthur's insistence, Rowell then officially listed them all under a collective name "The Kokoda Trail". Thereafter at the Supreme Commander's regular media conferences in Australia and later in Moresby, all journalists and his chain of command were instructed to refer to it as such – the term "trail" being more familiar to his adoring fans back home. A book written by Bill James, "*Field Guide to the Kokoda Track*", hand-written by one of the 2/23<sup>rd</sup> Battalion includes a photo of a diary indicating they have been ordered to use "Kokoda Trail". Similar diaries and records in the AWM's own archives confirm this directive. They reflect MacArthur's arrogant disregard for local names and customs. He saw no reason to rename the important supply track to Wau further to the west which was always known as the "Bulldog track", possibly because there was no significant American involvement or media coverage of this route.

5.

Rowell regularly raised the ire of then Brisbane-based MacArthur and Blamey by constantly questioning their remote tactical decisions. Following the arrival of his urgently requested aerial support including C47 "biscuit bombers" (DC3s) to drop critical supplies to besieged troops on the front line, he was driving past the northern end of the Seven Mile airfield in Moresby - later to be known as Jackson's Strip - when he was astounded to note there were over 27 aircraft including Flying Fortress' laden with fuel and bombs and the C47's with supplies all lined up in a neat row, wingtip to wingtip on the tarmac in preparation for flight. A robust protest by Rowell to the US Airforce Commander over the vulnerability of such a target, requesting him to immediately move the aircraft to the individual dispersal bays was initially denied. After forceful persuasion, it was begrudgingly acceded. Unfortunately, they were only placating words - no action was taken. The dispersal bays were large high earthen embankments in a horseshoe shape into which aircraft could be taxied for protection. They were scattered all along the far side of the airfield and the winding taxiways connecting it with the nearby Wards Strip. They are designed to shelter aircraft in the event of a bombing attack except if they receive a direct hit. Parked in the open, multiple warbirds could be destroyed with a single bomb or staffing run.

After successfully bombing shipping and facilities in Moresby's Fairfax harbour, a large formation of Japanese aircraft suddenly arrived at Seven Mile, destroying the entire flock of sitting ducks obligingly lined up for massacre. This arrogant stupidity placed our desperate, hungry and ammunition-depleted troops on the track in dire peril. The resultant unnecessary loss of dozens of lives was the inevitable outcome. The lesson of Pearl Harbour had not sunk in! It was just one example of the all-too-regular instances of military administrative and tactical incompetence, all of which were immediately swept under the camouflage net by MacArthur's PR machine. Legendary Australian war cameraman Damien Parer and journalist Osmar White were quickly on the scene to record the deadly carnage. I am unaware if one frame of Damien's film nor one word of Osmar's report ever found their way into then publicly accessible official records. After being subjected to constant valid questioning of remote faulty tactical decisions by Rowell, MacArthur was scathing with criticism of his performance to Prime Minister Curtin whom he convinced to remove Rowell from his post. More manipulation of facts and silencing of experienced military personnel to preserve MacArthur's image! After the war, Rowell's actions were officially vindicated.

The Japanese were halted at Imita Ridge, in sight of their objective when they were forced to retreat back to Buna on the northern coast. MacArthur waited till he considered it safe to re-locate to Port Moresby, ensconcing himself in Government House. Respected British-Canadian and ABC radio journalist Kate Vellacott-Jones, stationed in Moresby before the war and remaining there during the conflict was amongst the many accredited war correspondents at MacArthur's now resumed stage-managed media conferences.

6.

After the war she worked for the Department of Information and Extension Services as senior communications officer. Kate confirmed his continued dogmatic insistence the word "trail" be used in all their outgoing despatches. There was no reason for me to doubt her recollection of these significant history-manipulating directives. Veteran Aussie journalist Sean Dorney who also later worked for the ABC in PNG for decades reconfirmed my assertions by consistently referring to the route as the "track" in all his despatches.

In January 1963 a crude sign remained at Owers Corner. It was at the end of the vehicular route from Port Moresby and the beginning of the track, proclaiming it was the "Kokoda Trail" although some other deteriorating wooden signs nearby referred to the "track". The writer was acutely aware of local resentment to the use of, and eventual official adoption of the word "trail" to describe the route. The government later gazetted the unpopular name and included it in military awards. This self-perpetuating official historical distortion is further evidence of official Australian war records, the AWM and resultant public perception being moulded by the personal preference of an influential but deluded allied army commander.

MacArthur's media conferences in Australia and Port Moresby were structured to take advantage of the most powerful communications tool at the time - the motion picture - and to appeal and impress his unquestioning fans back home. Knowing his audiences would not understand the meaning of the word "track", he insisted the word "trail" was used in nearly all narratives. These were for predominantly European and American newsreel production and distribution companies who then dominated the world cinema newsreel industry including Australia. Our local Cinesound Review was a minor player in cinemas and received much less local screening and little, if any, overseas. Most of the world's population, including the writer during the 1940s was being continually exposed to the overseas companies' coverage and interpretation of the Pacific offensive. Damien Parer had initially filmed these events for the Australian Department of Information and later for Paramount News. He always referred to "the track" in his dope sheets. These were factual descriptive shot information details destined for the newsreel editors which accompanied his reels of newsfilm out of Port Moresby.

"Track" was used in the narrative of the special documentary newsreel "*Kokoda front line*" by Damien when he made an impassioned personal appeal on Cinesound Review to the previously complacent apathetic Australian public. He warned of the danger they faced, urging them to support their troops in combat. It was judged the best documentary film in the 15<sup>th</sup> Academy awards, being the first Australian film to win an Oscar. However, with the majority of the other newsreels and most of the Australian print media complying with MacArthur's directive, "trail" remained cemented in the mind-set of the public.

7.

In the absence of information except which MacArthur had approved, the Australian army hierarchy, their propaganda machine, cartographers and other military HQ personnel were constantly exposed to manipulated information in the cinemas, newspapers, on the radio and increasingly at official briefing sessions. This embedded MacArthur's version of events in their documentation and compounded the entrenched factual distortion. Maps which had previously shown the route using various names including road, path, track etc. were changed to "trail". Some erroneously suggested the Japanese were so confident of reaching Port Moresby by the overland route, similar to the successful tactics they were using in Singapore, as they had studied maps of both objectives and noted an apparent road network leading to their destination. This was supported by the report of one of the invading commanders bringing his horse with him on which he intended to ride into battle. If so, it is likely future marine archaeologists will discover a fleet of sunken landing barges containing thousands of rusting bicycles originally intended for regimented riders!

Persuasive arguments have been made by credible academics, authors and historians who prefer "trail". However their supportive evidence can usually be traced back to journals, official decisions and material published after MacArthur took control. Some historians who support the name "trail" refer to a book written in the early 1930s by a Sogeri rubber plantation manager's wife who referred to the route as a "trail". They failed to realise it was written to appeal to those in her homeland – America. Another argument used to justify the use of the word is the description of the route between military sites of interest such as on the European Western Front Battlefield and similar locations. The distinction between the two names becomes apparent when you consider most Aussies use the term "track" to describe a route through bushland or similar terrain such as the "Australian Alps walking track" (NSW, ACT & Vic), the "Bibbulmun" and "Cape to Cape" tracks (WA), the "Overland", "Port Davey", "South Coast", "Overland" tracks (TAS) and others throughout the nation. It is obvious why the path through the Papuan jungle was known to the Australian troops as a "track". Americans make no differentiation of the type of terrain in which the routes exist. It is acknowledged that in later years, due to the TV-influenced penchant for some local lemmings to replace traditional Australian words with American terminology, many new hiking routes and trekking paths in Australia have been called "trails".

Apart from press briefings aimed at wide media exposure, MacArthur also established a radio station in Port Moresby. It was intended to inform and motivate the troops camped nearby but always referred to their looming battleground as "the trail". After the war, the station was taken over by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and known as 9PA. Nearly all the soldiers based in Port Moresby prior to MacArthur's appointment originally referred to the route as "the track". They and others camped elsewhere were also fed a regular diet of American newsreels included with other morale-boosting film entertainment.

8.

While these were intended to keep them in touch with how the war was going, soldiers' diaries in the AWM's archives show the use of the new description gradually appearing in their personal entries. Many eventually referred to their combat area as "the trail" as they became indoctrinated with the use of this foreign term. It explains why they used it decades later when historians interviewed the remaining veterans.

On the battlefield, while MacArthur's military masquerade was maintaining momentum, Sapper H. "Bert" Beros, NX6925, 7th Australian Division, Royal Australian Engineers was penning this now-famous poem in the brief moments between action on the track and which he later sent home to his mother.

### **Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels.**

*Many a mother in Australia  
when the busy day is done  
Sends a prayer to the Almighty  
for the keeping of her son  
Asking that an angel guide him  
and bring him safely back  
Now we see those prayers are answered  
on the Owen Stanley Track*

*For they haven't any halos  
only holes slashed in their ears  
And their faces worked by tattoos  
with scratch pins in their hair  
Bringing back the badly wounded  
just as steady as a horse  
Using leaves to keep the rain off  
and as gentle as a nurse*

*Slow and careful in the bad places  
on the awful mountain track  
The look upon their faces  
would make you think Christ was black  
Not a move to hurt the wounded  
as they treat him like a saint  
It's a picture worth recording  
that an artist's yet to paint*

*Many a lad will see his mother  
and husbands see their wives  
Just because the fuzzy wuzzy  
carried them to save their lives  
From mortar bombs and machine gun fire  
or chance surprise attacks  
To the safety and the care of doctors  
at the bottom of the track*

*May the mothers of Australia  
when they offer up a prayer  
Mention those impromptu angels  
with their fuzzy wuzzy hair.*

While the AWM has this poem and other evidence which clearly establishes the route was known by his mates as a track, they continue to use the word "Trail" in the name of the battle's main display gallery and in all its official promotional material. Only the relatively small panel in the exhibition acknowledges and elaborates on the naming controversy.

The official Commonwealth Battle Nomenclature committee in London, and later its Australian counterpart capitulated to MacArthur's manipulated media onslaught. Their naming recommendations were based on tainted Army records with his distorted official battle reports. They were unwittingly supported by the writings of several credible but misinformed authors who produced their books towards the end and after the conflict.



9.

Due to censorship during the wartime years, most of what was subsequently made publicly available was derived from these sources. In 1958 a "Kokoda Trail" award was created and presented to the Papuan Infantry Regiment and ten Australian infantry battalions, thereby further entrenching MacArthur's fabrications. Successive government and other instrumentalities have relied on these erroneous proclamations without questioning the original source of the information.

Over recent years this writer unsuccessfully attempted to get the AWM to address these concerns, beginning in 2017 when they were formally expressed to its chairman. The first and only response received some weeks later was from a commercial Kokoda tour operator who then used the word "Trail" in his business name. He was also author of a book promoting the route as a "trail". In a questionable anomaly of bureaucratic protocol, the AWM had asked him to respond to the letter on its behalf. He denounced the facts presented, referring to his appended published writings which denigrated those who thought otherwise. This included a scathing critique of the Department of Veterans Affairs who supported use of the word "track". By unfairly accusing those who opposed the word "trail" of having an anti-American bias, it further inflamed the perpetual controversy. Such provocative language from AWM's quasi representative did little to engender rational debate or respect for the Memorial. The same vigorous opponent of the word "track" was featured on TV in 2019 during the coverage of a dispute by local villagers who had erected barricades along the track. They were complaining they had not received enough compensation for damage done to their land by commercial trek operators. The villagers erected signs near their homes stating "*Kokoda Track is closed*".

By July 2023 the physical confrontation had continued to escalate with more villagers combining to protest at the increasing number of tours degrading their land. The dispute intensified to the point where both PNG and Australian government entities were at odds over responsibility for the track's general condition, financial upkeep and the tourist and porters' amenities along the route. The villagers claimed its degradation was solely due to the lure of the considerable profits being made from the intensifying trekking traffic. The Diggers would have been dismayed if they knew the previous reverence in which the route was held is now claimed as being discarded for financial gain. Amongst those objecting to many aspects of the new regulations of this activity was the same tour operator who had now removed the word "Trail" from his new business name but previously represented the AWM vigorously promoting it. If he is continuing to be an AWM spokesperson it may suggest they too may be reconsidering their position on the continued use of this increasingly discredited term, now rejected by members of the Kokoda Tours Association. Fortunately, most PNG residents and tourists are nearly all now using the word "track".

10.

After a subsequent email in 2017 to the AWM, a positive and informative letter of April 29<sup>th</sup> was received directly from its chairman who attempted to justify their stance. Paradoxically it included a published well-researched and factual un-biased document by the AWM's military section historian Dr. Karl James. He conceded the soldiers who fought in the Kokoda action overwhelmingly used the term "track" to describe the route. Despite this and conclusive evidence such as diaries, maps and other documentary material in its archives supporting its rejected version of history, the AWM continues to use the word "trail" exclusively in its publications, on its website and other media. By being knowingly complicit in the promotion of proven discredited official records, the AWM is allowing its own credibility and reputation to be compromised in the eyes of increasing numbers of critical Australians.

The Remembrance Service at the AWM commemorating 75 years after the epic battle was poignant and significant, evidenced by the steadily declining numbers of Kokoda veterans in attendance. It was refreshing to note during the ceremony most of the speakers with the exception of establishment-compliant Army personnel were now using the word "track" to describe the route. Retired and respected General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove uses the term "track" when referring to the battle. It is hoped the AWM can be convinced to publicly follow his example. "*Battle of the Kokoda Track*" gold crown coins were produced for international distribution by Bradford Exchange to commemorate the anniversary. Memorial plaques in Kings Park near the WA State War Memorial and other locations throughout the nation also refer to the "*Kokoda Track*". Compounding the problem over recent decades is both the PNG and Australian governments' use of the AWM's interpretation for gazetting names and awards such as the military "*Kokoda Trail Award*". Politicians seem to want to have it both ways. During a joint press conference held in Port Moresby in 2008 by the Prime Ministers of both Australia and PNG where the Kokoda route was the prime topic, transcripts reveal both politicians and the journalists used the word "track" exclusively – "trail" was never mentioned!

Because of the understandable reverence in which the AWM is held, governments, individuals, organisations and the media are reluctant to confront its authority. Students of military history, authors, the media and others continue to turn to it for authoritative guidance with their material. When this writer contacted newspaper journalists who used the term "trail" in their Kokoda stories, they revealed when challenged they knew it was "track". But when submitting their work to sub-editors were told it was the paper's policy to follow the AWM's example. By extension, the AWM is guilty of perpetuating MacArthur's deliberate manipulations to the detriment of our proud military heritage.

11.

Military galleries usually use one name to describe significant battles, ie. The Battle of the Dardanelles - Gallipoli, The Siege of Tobruk - Tobruk, etc. While the name of AWM's gallery remains as "The Kokoda Trail", it reinforces the perception it is the only name officially acceptable, discouraging use of alternatives. There is no reason the gallery can't simply be called "Kokoda".

An increasing number of contemporary independent authors and journalists are deciding not to regurgitate MacArthur's deceptions. They are exposing the mis-placed hero-worshiping and the fabrications in many of his official reports which had previously been slavishly accepted as fact by misinformed authors in their early publications. Many later tomes, unlike this article, have had the professional support of several credible researchers and archivists. Thankfully, they also reinforce comments made in this text.

Our wartime heritage should always be compiled and based on factual accounts provided by our own people. Despite repudiating evidence, the AWM and the Army Archives are bureaucratically obliged to present some misleading provenance of one of Australia's greatest wartime triumphs as being our nation's official military record. It only takes one high profile exhibit in any respected history or heritage display to have its authenticity knowingly questioned. This causes the visitor to treat the remainder of its collection with similar suspicion. Rather than a brief explanation of the Kokoda naming controversy being confined to a small panel in the Memorial's gallery, only visible to those fortunate enough to visit, the AWM should publicly confront the elephant in the room - the full story of the MacArthur deception - by making concerted efforts to promote it to the wider public.

With time running out to complete this extended project, it was considered a courtesy for the AWM and the Army Archives to be invited to comment on what is written.

The Australian War Memorial's director, Mr. Matt Anderson PSM responded with a letter of June 16<sup>th</sup> 2023 stating the Memorial's position;

*"The Australian War Memorial acknowledges the debate on terminology regarding the Kokoda campaign. This is represented in both our galleries and online"*

*"The Memorial is informed by historical and academic material, but also by surviving veterans of the Kokoda campaign. The advice we have received is that most personnel with experience in the Kokoda campaign referred to the area as "the Owen Stanleys" and use track and trail interchangeably"*

12.

The Chief of the Australian Army, Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, AO, DSC, provided the following statement;

*"The Army remains aligned with the previous responses you have received from Mr. Matt Anderson, PSM and the Australian Army History Unit. Its position on the use of the terms Track and Trail reflects the statement provided by the Australian War Memorial."*

It is not suggested the official AWM curators and Army archivists should re-write military history. Both entities, now with access to previously concealed facts, should make an effort to have their records reflect reality rather than rely on the Walter Mitty-esque fabrications of a deluded Commander. Also to encourage their personnel to use "track" at public and ceremonial events.

The Memorial should be seen to be taking the initiative by announcing with some fanfare, the re-naming of its Kokoda display. By correcting its interpretation of the battle, publicly acknowledging as well as discontinuing its exclusive use of the word "trail", it will go a long way to regaining some lost credibility. With major refurbishment of the AWM galleries currently under way and on-going plans to re-evaluate existing displays, it is hoped the Kokoda gallery will be included in this long overdue re-assessment.

Currently on the parade ground of public perception, the Australian Army Archives and the Australian War Memorial appear to be the only ones being kept out of step with the rest of the nation, locked into a bureaucratic system where previous mistakes are not easily rectified. They need the weight of public, government and other stakeholders' support for truthful chronicling of all facets the legendary Kokoda battle including the deceptions of those who attempted to distort our proud military history for their own personal glory.

Both respected entities owe it to Australia.

*Ends*